

Practice Scenario Cards

Print single-sided and cut. Give the responder card to the practicing participant and the actor card ONLY to the person playing the other role. The gap between the two is the exercise.

SCENARIO 1 — THE PORCH AT MIDNIGHT

RESPONDER CARD

Welfare check, 11:40 p.m. A neighbor reports a man in his 60s sitting on his porch in the cold for three hours, not responding to greetings. Dispatch notes: wife died earlier this year; no known weapons; no prior calls. You arrive alone; co-response is 25 minutes out.

ACTOR CARD (do not show the responder)

You are exhausted and out of tears — tonight was the first time you said 'there's no point' out loud, and saying it scared you. You will not respond to cheerfulness or authority. You will respond, slowly, to someone who sits down, matches your quiet, and doesn't rush you. If they push transport early, you shut down completely. What you actually need: to not be alone tonight, and you half-know it.

FACILITATOR — WATCH FOR

Does the responder slow down to the scene's tempo or try to lift it? Do they earn the risk assessment through reflection, or interrogate? Does the close include tonight — not just a referral for Monday?

SCENARIO 2 — THE KITCHEN WITH TWO CLIENTS

RESPONDER CARD

Family disturbance call, 6 p.m. A 15-year-old locked herself in her room after an outburst where she threw a plate; her mother called 911 and meets you at the door talking fast, demanding her daughter be 'taken somewhere'. Father is at work. No injuries reported.

ACTOR CARD (do not show the responder)

MOTHER: You are terrified and it's presenting as anger. You interrupt, escalate, and demand action — but if a responder validates how frightening this is, you downshift fast and become an ally. DAUGHTER (second actor or facilitator, through the door): You'll talk through the door only to someone who doesn't start with commands. You threw the plate because your mother read your journal. You are embarrassed, not dangerous.

FACILITATOR — WATCH FOR

Who does the responder regulate first? (The caregiver is the scene.) Do they get low and slow at the door? Does the close keep the family system intact with a real next step, or default to removal because it's decisive-looking?

SCENARIO 3 — THE PARKING LOT HANDOFF

RESPONDER CARD

A gas station clerk reports a woman in her 30s pacing the lot for an hour, talking to herself, occasionally shouting. You recognize her from two previous contacts; last time ended in an ER drop-off that went nowhere. She has a case manager somewhere in the county system.

ACTOR CARD (do not show the responder)

You are frightened of the voices tonight and more frightened of the ER, where you waited nine hours and left with nothing. You test responders: if they mention the hospital in the first two minutes, you walk away fast. You WILL engage around concrete things — coffee, the cold, your dog. You'd accept a call to your case manager if someone can actually reach her, and you'd take a crisis-line warm transfer if the responder stays while it connects.

FACILITATOR — WATCH FOR

Does the responder weigh options beyond the ER default? Do they attempt the warm handoff — staying present through the connection — or hand over a number? Does their documentation plan capture what worked for next time?

SCENARIO 4 — THE COLLEAGUE

RESPONDER CARD

Not a dispatch. A teammate on your unit has been flat and short-fused for three weeks since a pediatric call. Tonight in the break room they say, 'Honestly, I don't know how much longer I can do this job.' You have ten minutes before shift.

ACTOR CARD (do not show the responder)

You meant it more than you'll admit. If your colleague gets clinical or quotes the EAP brochure at you, you laugh it off and the window closes. If they just stay — reflect, don't fix — you'll say more: not sleeping, dreading crisis calls, drinking more than usual. You'd accept 'walk over with me to peer support after shift' if it comes from a peer, not a form.

FACILITATOR — WATCH FOR

STAND applies inward: do they regulate their own alarm first? Reflect before referring? Is the close a concrete accompanied step, not a pamphlet? Debrief this one as a room — it's the sustenance module in miniature.